

Message Text

SECRET

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EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (P A R A 1 L I N E 1)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, LE, IS, SY
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: VARIOUS NOTES

REF: BEIRUT 4516

1. UNFORTUNATELY, ISRAELIS DO APPEAR
TO BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT A SYRIAN PLOT IN SOUTH
LEBANON. WE HEAR THE SAME THEME FROM CABINET
MINISTERS AND TAXI DRIVERS. IT MAY BE TRUE THAT THE
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ISRAELIS OCCASIONALLY GIVE DAMASCUS MORE CREDIT FOR
DEVIUSNESS THAN PROBABLY THE SYRIANS DESERVE. NONE-
THELESS, THE GOI ASSERTS IT HAS INTELLIGENCE OF SUFFICIENT
QUALITY TO ARGUE THAT THE HASTY APPROACH BY THE GOL TO
MOVE A FORCE OF THE LEBANESE ARMY TO THE SOUTH WAS A
PLOT ENGINEERED BY SYRIA TO GET RID OF HADDAD, ELIMINATE
THE ENCLAVES AND CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE. ISRAELIS HAVE

REFLECTED THIS POSITION UP AND DOWN THE LINE, AND WEIZMAN TOLD THE SECRETARY JUST THIS ON AUGUST 6. ADD GENERAL ISRAELI SUSPICION OF AND HATRED FOR SYRIANS, IDF INTELLIGENCE REPORTS AND THE FACT THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT DOES HAVE THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES, AND WE FIND ALL THE ELEMENTS FOR ISRAELI BELIEF IN A SYRIAN PLOT.

2. HOWEVER, A MORE SERIOUS ISSUE IS THE ONE NOTED IN PARA 4 OF REFTEL THAT THE LEBANESE INTENTION IS TO TAKE OVER THE ENCLAVES AND CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE. IF GOL THINKING ON THESE ISSUES HAS GONE NO FURTHER OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THEN IT HAS LEARNED NOTHING. HADDAD, SHIDDIAC, THE MILITIAS AND THE PEOPLE IN THE ENCLAVES HAVE LITTLE REASON TO WELCOME WITH OPEN ARMS THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOL. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LAST FEW WEEKS NO DOUBT HAD AS NEGATIVE AN EFFECT ON THEM AS IT DID ON BEIRUT. SHORT OF AN INTERNAL COLLAPSE OF THE ENCLAVES, THE GOL WILL PROBABLY GET FURTHER WITH HONEY IN REGAINING THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE PEOPLE THERE THAN WITH TOUGH TALK ABOUT ENDING THE LINK WITH ISRAEL.

3. ON THIS LAST POINT, WE NOTE THAT ON AUGUST 6 WEIZMAN TOLD THE SECRETARY, DURING HIS MEETING WITH THE MINISTERIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE, THAT "THE CLOSER YOU GET TO THE GOOD FENCE, THE MORE DELICATE THE SITUATION GETS FOR ISRAEL, AS WELL AS HADDAD." ISRAELIS ARE CLEARLY NOT GOING TO
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LET THE WEB OF ARRANGEMENTS THEY HAVE CONSTRUCTED IN THE SOUTH OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS GO BY THE WAYSIDE. NEITHER ARE THEY GOING TO ALLOW A RETURN TO A SITUATION IN WHICH THE PALESTINIANS CAN AGAIN EASILY OPERATE AGAINST ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER. AS FOR OUR TALKS WITH GOI REGARDING THE STILLBORN SHTAURA ACCORD, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE ISRAELI CONCERNS REFLECTED THEN ARE THE SAME TODAY. THE ISRAELIS INSIST THAT THE GOOD FENCE REMAIN OPEN, I.E., THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH CONTINUE OR SOMETHING EQUALLY EFFECTIVE FROM GOI PERSPECTIVE SUPPLANT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT. DESPITE THE PRESSURE WE PUT ON THE GOI, THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO BUDGE FROM THIS POSITION. IF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT THINKS THE ISRAELIS ARE SIMPLY GOING TO WALK AWAY FROM LEBANON, NORTH OR SOUTH, AND IF IT IS BASING ITS ACTIONS AND POLICY ON THE ASSUMPTION, IT IS MAKING A BIGGER MISTAKE THAN WHEN IT BLITHELY ASSUMED IT COULD RESOLVE THE HADDAD PROBLEM WITH A TRADITIONAL "LEBANESE SOLUTION," I.E., A LARGE CHECK.
LEWIS

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